

# NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

[Notice 97-040]

## National Environmental Policy Act; Cassini Mission

**AGENCY:** National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

**ACTION:** Notice of availability of draft supplemental environmental impact statement (DSEIS) for the Cassini mission to Saturn and its moons.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and NASA policy and procedures (14 CFR Part 1216, Subpart 1216.3), NASA has prepared and issued a DSEIS for the Cassini mission. The DSEIS focuses on updated information pertinent to the consequence and risk analyses of potential accidents during the launch and cruise phases of the mission. Such accidents could result in the release of plutonium dioxide from one or more of the three Radioisotope Thermoelectric Generators (RTG's) and the approximately 130 Radioisotope Heater Units (RHU's) onboard the Cassini spacecraft. The currently planned mission involves the launch of the Cassini spacecraft from Cape Canaveral Air Station (CCAS), Florida, during the primary launch opportunity that begins in early October 1997.

**DATES:** Comments on the DSEIS must be submitted in writing and received by NASA no later than May 27, 1997, or 45 days from the date of publication in the **Federal Register** of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's notice of availability of the Cassini mission DSEIS, whichever is later.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments should be addressed to Mr. Mark R. Dahl, NASA Headquarters, Code SD, Washington, DC 20546-0001. The DSEIS may be reviewed at the following locations:

(a) NASA Headquarters, Library, Room 1J20, 300 E Street, SW., Washington, DC 20546.

(b) Spaceport U.S.A., Room 2001, John F. Kennedy Space Center, FL 32899. Please call Lisa Fowler beforehand at 407-867-2497 so that arrangements can be made.

(c) Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Visitors Lobby, Building 249, 4800 Oak Grove Drive, Pasadena, CA 91109 (818-354-5179).

In addition, the DSEIS may be examined at the following NASA

locations by contacting the pertinent Freedom of Information Act Office:

(d) NASA, Ames Research Center, Moffett Field, CA 94035 (415-604-4190).

(e) NASA, Dryden Flight Research Center, Edwards, CA 93523 (805-258-3448).

(f) NASA, Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, MD 20771 (301-286-0730).

(g) NASA, Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX 77058 (713-483-8612).

(h) NASA, Langley Research Center, Hampton, VA 23665 (757-864-2497).

(i) NASA, Lewis Research Center, 21000 Brookpark Road, Cleveland, OH 44135 (216-433-2222).

(j) NASA, Marshall Space Flight Center, AL 35812 (205-544-0031).

(k) NASA, Stennis Space Center, MS 39529 (601-688-2164).

Limited copies of the DSEIS are available, on a first request basis, by contacting Mark Dahl at the address or telephone number indicated herein.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mark Dahl, 202-358-1544.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The planned Cassini mission is an international cooperative effort of NASA, the European Space Agency, and the Italian Space Agency, to explore the planet Saturn and its environment. Saturn is the second-largest and second-most massive planet in the solar system and has the largest, most visible dynamic ring structure of all the planets. The planned mission is an important part of NASA's program for exploration of the solar system, the goal of which is to understand the system's birth and evolution. The Cassini mission would involve a 4-year scientific exploration of Saturn, its atmosphere, moons, rings, and magnetosphere. The Cassini spacecraft consists of the Cassini Orbiter and the detachable Huygens Probe. The Huygens Probe would be released for a parachute descent into the atmosphere of Titan, Saturn's largest moon. The scientific information gathered by the Cassini mission could help provide clues to the evolution of the solar system and the origin of life on Earth.

NASA issued the *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Cassini Mission* in July 1995 (hereinafter the "EIS") followed by the associated Record of Decision (ROD) to complete preparation of the Cassini mission for launch in the October 1997 opportunity, or either the secondary or backup opportunities, and to implement the mission.

The Cassini spacecraft would carry three RTG's that use the heat of decay

of plutonium dioxide to generate electric power for the spacecraft and its instruments. The spacecraft would also use approximately 130 RHU's, each containing a small amount of plutonium dioxide, to generate heat for controlling the thermal environment of the spacecraft and several of its instruments.

The action selected and documented in the ROD consists of completing preparations for and implementing the Cassini mission to Saturn and its moons, with a launch of the Cassini spacecraft onboard a Titan IV (SRMU)/Centaur. The launch would take place at CCAS during the primary launch opportunity that begins in early October 1997 and continues into mid-November 1997. A secondary launch opportunity extends from the end of November 1997 to early January 1998, with a backup opportunity from mid-March to early April 1999, both using the Titan IV (SRMU)/Centaur. The primary launch opportunity would employ a Venus-Venus-Earth-Jupiter-Gravity-Assist trajectory to Saturn; the secondary and backup opportunities would both employ a Venus-Earth-Earth-Gravity-Assist (VEEGA) trajectory. The above primary launch opportunity remains NASA's preferred alternative and Proposed Action and would allow the Cassini spacecraft to gather the full science return desired to accomplish mission objectives.

Along with the No-Action alternative (ceasing preparations and not implementing the Cassini mission), the EIS evaluated in detail two other mission alternatives. The March 1999 alternative would have used two Shuttle flights with on-orbit integration of the spacecraft and upper stage, followed by injection of the spacecraft into a VEEGA trajectory to Saturn. Due to the long lead-time in developing and certifying the new upper stage that would be needed to implement it, this alternative is no longer considered reasonable. The other mission alternative considered in the EIS was the 2001 alternative which would use a Titan IV (SRMU)/Centaur to launch the spacecraft from CCAS in March 2001 on a Venus-Venus-Venus-Gravity-Assist trajectory. A backup opportunity in May 2002 would use a VEEGA trajectory. The 2001 alternative would require completing development and testing of a new high-performance rhenium engine for the spacecraft, as well as adding about 20 percent more propellant to the spacecraft. Science returns from this alternative would meet the minimum acceptable level for the mission.

The EIS analyses demonstrated that completing preparations for and

implementing a normal Cassini mission would not significantly impact the human environment. The principal concern associated with all mission alternatives (except No-Action) was with accidents during launch and operation of the mission that have the potential to result in a release of plutonium dioxide from the RTG's and/or RHU's onboard the spacecraft. In response, NASA and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), using the best information available at that time, developed an array of representative accident scenarios that could potentially result in a release of plutonium dioxide from the RTG's. NASA and DOE analyzed the representative accident scenarios with respect to the consequences and risks. The results of those analyses were presented in the Cassini EIS.

Updated results from the continuing tests and analyses have recently become available for NASA review. This updated data indicates that there is new information relevant to the environmental impacts of the Proposed Action.

The DSEIS compares the updated data from the ongoing analyses with those in the EIS and focuses on the areas where the largest differences are estimated. The DSEIS addresses the Proposed Action, the No-Action alternative, and the 2001 mission alternative that is still available to NASA.

**Jeffrey E. Sutton,**

*Acting Associate Administrator for Management Systems and Facilities.*

[FR Doc. 97-9104 Filed 4-8-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7510-01-M

## NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

[Notice 97-041]

### Notice of Prospective Patent License

**AGENCY:** National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

**ACTION:** Notice of Prospective Patent License.

**SUMMARY:** NASA hereby gives notice that Grand Illusion/Living Window, Inc., of Dover, New Hampshire 03820, has applied for a partially exclusive license to practice the invention described and claimed in U.S. Patent No. 5,559,923, entitled "VAPOR GENERATOR WAND," which is assigned to the United States of America as represented by the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Written objections to the prospective grant of a license should be sent to Langley Research Center.

**DATES:** Responses to this notice must be received by June 9, 1997.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Ms. Kimberly A. Chasteen, Patent Attorney, NASA Langley Research Center, Mail Stop 212, Hampton, VA 23681-0001, telephone (757) 864-3227; fax (757) 864-9190.

Dated: April 2, 1997.

**Edward A. Frankle,**  
*General Counsel.*

[FR Doc. 97-9103 Filed 4-8-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7510-01-M

## NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

[Notice 97-042]

### Notice of Prospective Patent License

**AGENCY:** National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

**ACTION:** Notice of Prospective Patent License.

**SUMMARY:** NASA hereby gives notice that HITCO Technologies, Inc. of Gardena, California 90249-2506; Materials and Electromechanical Research Corporation (MER), of Tucson, Arizona 85706; P & P Machine Tool, Inc., of Cleveland, Ohio 44146, and Zollner Piston of Fort Wayne, Indiana 46803, have each applied for a partially exclusive license to practice the inventions described and claimed in NASA Case No. LAR-15274-1, entitled "Carbon Fiber Reinforced Carbon Composite Valve for an Internal Combustion Engine," and NASA Case No. LAR-15653-1, entitled "Method of Manufacturing Carbon Fiber Reinforced Carbon Composite Valves for an Internal Combustion Engine," both for which United States Patent Applications were filed on March 12, 1997, by the United States of America as represented by the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Written objections to the prospective grant of a license should be sent to Langley Research Center.

**DATES:** Responses to this notice must be received by June 9, 1997.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Ms. Kimberly A. Chasteen, Patent Attorney, Langley Research Center, Mail Stop 212, Hampton, VA 23681-0001, telephone (757) 864-3227; fax (757) 864-9190.

Dated: April 2, 1997.

**Edward A. Frankle,**  
*General Counsel.*

[FR Doc. 97-9102 Filed 4-8-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7510-01-M

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

### Records Schedules; Availability and Request for Comments

**AGENCY:** Office of National Archives and Records Administration, Records Services.

**ACTION:** Notice of availability of proposed records schedules; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) publishes notice at least once monthly of certain Federal agency requests for records disposition authority (records schedules). Records schedules identify records of sufficient value to warrant preservation in the National Archives of the United States. Schedules also authorize agencies after a specified period to dispose of records lacking administrative, legal, research, or other value. Notice is published for records schedules that (1) Propose the destruction of records not previously authorized for disposal, or (2) reduce the retention period for records already authorized for disposal. NARA invites public comments on such schedules, as required by 44 USC 3303a(a).

**DATES:** Requests for copies must be received in writing on or before May 27, 1997. Once the appraisal of the records is completed, NARA will send a copy of the schedule. The requester will be given 30 days to submit comments.

**ADDRESSES:** Address requests for single copies of schedules identified in this notice to the Civilian Appraisal Staff (NWRC), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD 20740-6001. Requesters must cite the control number assigned to each schedule when requesting a copy. The control number appears in the parentheses immediately after the name of the requesting agency.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Each year U.S. Government agencies create billions of records on paper, film, magnetic tape, and other media. In order to control this accumulation, agency records managers prepare records schedules specifying when the agency no longer needs the records and what happens to the records after this period. Some schedules are comprehensive and cover all the records of an agency or one of its major subdivisions. These comprehensive schedules provide for the eventual transfer to the National Archives of historically valuable records and authorize the disposal of all other records. Most schedules, however, cover records of only one office or program or a few series of records, and many are